



# Study in the United States of America

## A Guide for Students in the U.A.E.



Embassy of the  
United States of America  
Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.  
<http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov>

Consulate General of the  
United States of America  
Dubai, U.A.E.  
<http://dubai.usconsulate.gov>



# Letter from the Ambassador

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Dear Prospective Student,

During my time as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, I have had the privilege of meeting many successful Emirati officials, professionals, businesspeople, and academics who have studied and lived in the U.S. That experience helped define their future paths and enriched their lives.

American higher education is something of which we Americans are quite proud. Our philosophy of open inquiry, intellectual liberty, and individual empowerment produces innovative, creative minds ready to engage the world and solve problems. A vital part of our success in higher education is the presence of hundreds of thousands of international students. The presence of students from all over the world helps develop the bonds of friendship that are the foundation of mutual understanding.

We believe that exchange programs and education abroad open new channels of communication between our people and other nations. We want you to know about the real America, and we want you to remember that when you study abroad you will be an ambassador of your country to the U.S. Share your culture and your traditions with the Americans you meet. They will benefit as much from your experience as you.

Whatever path you choose to follow in higher education, I wish you success. Should you choose to study in the U.S., I know you will return to your country with a richer understanding of American culture and society – and of your own.

Warm Regards,

Richard G. Olson, Jr.  
*U.S. Ambassador to  
the United Arab Emirates*



This booklet provides preliminary information on studying in the United States. For more information about Education Advising Offices affiliated with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, please visit:

<http://www.educationUSA.state.gov>

<http://exchanges.state.gov>

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## Educational Advising Services in the U.A.E.

(Available from the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi  
and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai)

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The educational advising services offered at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai are certified by EducationUSA and affiliated with the United States Department of State.

EducationUSA centers promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, objective and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States and guidance to qualified individuals on how to best access those opportunities.

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### Services for Students

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- College counseling and guidance on the admission process, academic scholarships, admission tests (TOEFL, SAT, GMAT, GRE, etc.), and summer camps.
- Announcements on upcoming educational events and visits by U.S. colleges and universities.



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## Services for Educational Institutions

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- Sessions and workshops on U.S. education conducted at the EducationUSA Center, schools, colleges, and other institutions.

Topics include: pre-departure orientations, pre-admissions, U.S. college requirements, U.S. visa procedures, as well as different fields of study in the U.S.A.



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## Contact Information

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### U.S. Embassy, Abu Dhabi

Tel: +971-2-414 2245

Email: EducationUSAAD@state.gov  
EducationUSAAD@gmail.com

Website: [http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational\\_advising\\_res.html](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational_advising_res.html)  
<http://www.facebook.com/usembassyabudhabi>

### U.S. Consulate General, Dubai

Tel: +971-4-311 6172

Email: EducationUSAdubai@state.gov

Website: <http://dubai.usconsulate.gov/resources.html>



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## Why Study in the United States

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More than 3,900 colleges and universities offer undergraduate degree programs in the United States. This vast choice means there are programs available to meet everyone's needs – but how can you find the best program for you?! This guide aims to give you the knowledge you need to make the right choice.

Here are just a few reasons why more than 600,000 international students from around the world are furthering their education in the United States:

**Quality:** U.S. colleges and universities are known worldwide for the quality of their academic programs, facilities, resources, and faculty.

**Choice:** The U.S. education system is unrivalled worldwide in the choice it offers of types of institutions, academic and social environments, entry requirements, degree programs, and subjects in which you can specialize.

**Value:** As an investment in your future, a U.S. degree offers excellent value for the money. A wide range of tuition fees and living costs, plus some financial help from colleges, has made study in the United States affordable to students.

**Flexibility:** Not only is there flexibility in the choice of courses within a college or university, there is also the option for students to move from one institution to another.

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## The American Education System

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Education in the United States follows a pattern similar to that in many systems. Early childhood education is followed by primary school (called elementary school in the United States), middle school, secondary school (called high school in the United States), and then postsecondary (tertiary) education. Postsecondary education includes non-degree programs that lead to certificates and diplomas, plus several degree levels: associate, bachelor, master, and PhD. Adult and continuing education, as well as special education, cut across all educational levels.

U.S. Department of Education ([www.ED.gov](http://www.ED.gov))

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## Types of U.S. Higher Education

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Degree-granting institutions in the United States can be called by any of these terms: school, college, and/or university. As a general rule, colleges tend to be smaller and usually offer only undergraduate degrees, while a university also offers graduate degrees. Within each college or university you will find schools, such as the school of arts and sciences or the school of business. Each school is responsible for the degree programs offered by the college or university in that area of study.

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### State Universities

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State universities are founded and subsidized by U.S. state governments (for example, California, Michigan, or Texas) to provide affordable education to residents of that state. They may also be called public universities to distinguish them from private institutions. Some include the words “state university” in their title or include a regional element such as “eastern” or “northern”.

State universities tend to be very large, with enrollments of 20,000 or more students.

*“International students are  
considered  
out-of-state residents”*

Their costs are generally lower than those of private universities.

In-state residents (those who live and pay taxes in that particular state) pay much lower tuition

than out-of-state residents (residents of other states). International students, as well as those from other states, are considered out-of-state residents and therefore do not benefit from reduced tuition at state institutions.

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## Private Universities

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Private universities are funded by a combination of endowments, tuition fees, research grants, and gifts from their alumni. Tuition fees tend to be higher at private universities than at state universities, but there is no distinction made between state and non-state residents.

*“Tuition fees tend to be  
higher at private  
universities”*

Colleges with religious affiliations and single-sex colleges are private. In general, private universities have enrollments of fewer than 20,000 students, and private colleges may have 2,000 or fewer students on their campuses.



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## Community Colleges

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Community Colleges provide two-year associate degree programs, usually called the associate of arts (A.A.) or associate of science (A.S.) degrees, as well as excellent technical and vocational programs. Community colleges are community-based institutions with close links to secondary schools, community groups, and employers, and many U.S. students live close to campus with their families. They can be public or private institutions and are sometimes called junior colleges or two-year colleges.

*“junior colleges or  
two-year colleges”*

Tuition costs are often lower at two-year than at four-year institutions, and many have agreements to allow students on transfer programs to move easily into the third year of a bachelor's degree at the local state university.

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## Technical and Vocational Colleges

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Technical and Vocational Colleges specialize in preparing students for entry into, or promotion within, the world of work. They offer certificate and other short-term programs that train students in the theory behind a specific vocation or technology, as well as in how to work with the technology. There are several thousand technical and vocational colleges across the United States, and they may be private or public institutions.

*“certificate and other  
short-term programs”*

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## Distance Education

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Distance Education is an increasingly popular way to study for everything from a short professional course to a graduate degree in the United States. Under the distance education

*“Internet, satellite television,  
video conferencing ...”*

model, students no longer attend classes in a classroom on a campus; instead, classes are delivered “from a distance” through the use of technologies such as the Internet, satellite television, video conferencing, and other means of electronic delivery.

Studying for a degree using distance education requires students to have special qualities, including self-discipline and the ability to work on their own.

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## Non-Degree Study

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Non-Degree Study is for students who want to study in the United States at a college or university, but not for a full degree, or for students who want to experience life on a U.S. campus.

*“not for a full  
degree”*

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## Frequently Asked Questions: Education in the United States

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### When do I begin my search for colleges and universities in the United States?



Begin your search 14 – 18 months before your intended departure date.

For Example: If you plan to start your study in the U.S. in September 2011, you should begin your search in June/July 2010.

### How do I begin my search and how can I choose the best college for me?

Ask yourself a few questions:

- What do I want to study?
- Does my secondary school coursework prepare me for the demands of this major?
- Can I meet the admission requirements?
- What kind of environment do I want to live in? (large city, small town, cold climate, close to family, etc.)
- Do I want to go to a small (under 5,000), medium (10,000+), or large (20,000+) school?
- What is my budget and how much can my family afford to pay?

- Do I want to go to a public or private institution?
- Do I want to attend a university that has services for international students?



**Selectivity:** Because the U.S. university system is so extensive, admission requirements vary greatly. Highly selective private universities and liberal arts colleges may receive enormous numbers of applicants and accept only a small number, while other colleges may accept all applicants who meet their admissions standards. Some of the selectivity assessment factors that are considered in the selectivity process are the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) score and grade point average (GPA), as well as a variety of other factors, including essays, prizes, community service, work experience, hobbies, and special talents, as admissions officers review applications to try to determine your potential for success at their institutions.

## What is a grade point average (GPA)?

Each student completes his or her degree with a grade point average (GPA). A cumulative grade point average is the GPA for all courses taken throughout the degree program. Most universities use a GPA scale of 4.0, but a few universities use scale of 5.0. To work out your GPA, take the numerical value assigned to the letter grade you achieve for each

### GRADING

The most common grading scale in the United States is the A – F / 0 – 4 scale:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1 (U.S. concept)

F = 0 (failure) [sometimes called E]

course (typically 4 points for an “A,” 3 points for a “B,” and so on), then multiply this number by the number of credits each course is worth. Finally, add these numbers together and divide by the total number of credits for all courses.

For example:

Letter Grade	Numerical Value	Number of Credits	Total
A	4.0	3	12
B	3.0	3	9
C	2.0	3	6
Total:		9	27
<b>GPA = <math>27 \div 9 = 3.0</math></b>			

### Can you give me a list of the top schools in business, engineering, etc.?

Many ranking lists are created by magazines and other publications; however, **NO** list has official status or is endorsed by the U.S. government! Rankings are likely to be subjective, and they are generally based on a wide range of criteria that do not necessary include academic standards. And last but not least, the “best” college or university for you will be based on many other factors, including how you feel about a program’s potential to meet your needs.

## What is the admissions timeline for high school students?

Below is the recommended timetable for applying to universities in the United States. It is sometimes possible to complete the process more quickly, but you may have a much more limited choice of schools. Planning well ahead gives you sufficient time to make successful applications to the colleges of your choice.

**Grade 11** - Begin your research, and consider the following:

- What are the reasons for wanting to study in the United States?
- Which universities will meet your needs?
- Will you need financial assistance?
- Find out application and financial aid deadlines. This will affect when you take the standardized tests (TOEFL, SAT etc.) required for admission, since test results must reach admissions offices no later than these deadlines. The tests should be taken in advance of submitting university application forms.
- Register to take standardized tests if required by the universities to which you are applying.
- Begin narrowing down your choices of schools to approximately 10 to 20 institutions.



**Grade 12** - Complete the following:

### August (beginning of grade 12)

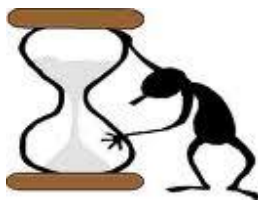
- Search university websites for applications, financial aid forms, and information on different academic programs.
- Register with collegeboard.com to take the TOEFL, SAT I, and SAT II, if necessary.

### September - December

- Request an official transcript from your school.
- Request letters of recommendation from your teachers.
- Submit completed application forms (for admission as well as financial aid).
- Double check that transcripts and references have been sent to universities.
- Take the necessary admissions tests.

### January – April

- University application deadlines must be met; note that these are for regular admission, whereas early admission deadlines will be sooner.



## April – June (end of grade 12)

- Letters of acceptance or rejection arrive. Decide which university to attend, notify the admissions office of your decision, complete and return any forms they require.
- Send letters of regret to those universities you turn down.
- Organize finances: arrange to transfer funds to a U.S. bank; make sure you have funds for travel and expenses on arrival.
- Finalize arrangements for housing and medical insurance with your university.



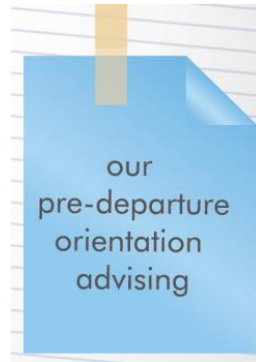
## June – August

- Apply to your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a visa upon your receipt of the original I-20 form (usually arrives with the acceptance letter that you receive in the mail) well in advance of your departure date.
- Make travel arrangements.
- Contact the International Student Office (ISO) at your university with details of your arrival plans, and confirm details of any orientation for new students held by the university.



## Getting Ready to Go:

Once you know that you are going to study in the United States, you will probably have many questions about visas, accommodation, health insurance, banking, how to study, and other “pre-departure” information. Most U.S. educational information and advising centers conduct pre-departure orientation sessions in the summer, and some may also offer sessions midyear. Contact the EducationUSA advising center at the nearest U.S. embassy or U.S. consulate general for their schedule and to reserve space for these popular events.



## What are the important subjects to take in high school that admission officers focus on?

- English
- Mathematics (traditional math is preferred over specialized math)
- Science, preferable with laboratory lessons (laboratory science requires critical thought)
- Social Studies
- Foreign Language with literature study (French, etc.)



## **What about my GPA, and how do admissions officers calculate it?**

Admissions officers recalculate your GPA from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade based solely on your five major subjects mentioned above. Most schools use a three-year cumulative average and then let the senior year (grade 12) stand alone as a final factor. Your pre-admission will be based on the transcripts of grades 9 to 11, but will be finalized after your grade 12 results.

## **Is it better for the student to take easier courses and get an “A”, or take harder courses (such as AP classes) and get a “B”?**

As a general rule, admissions officers look favorably upon the student who challenges himself academically rather than taking an easy A.



## **What is an extracurricular profile and what is meant by a strong extracurricular profile?**

An extracurricular profile is a description of activities a student participates in outside of school. This includes community service, hobbies, and sports. It is very important in aiding admissions officers in understanding the student as a whole person, and not basing judgments solely on his/her academic achievements. A strong profile shows sustained commitment, increased responsibility over time, creativity, a

demonstration of unconventional strengths, and a genuine enthusiasm for the activities that appear on the student's list. Following is a year-by-year extracurricular planning guide and extracurricular/community services activity sheet:

<b>Grade 9</b>	Explore a variety of interests, with the goal of selecting a few to pursue longer-term.
<b>Grade 10</b>	Build skills and experience in a few activities; take on increased responsibility (e.g., join committees or run for a higher student council position); build relationships with faculty leaders of clubs or coaches of sports teams for future recommendations.
<b>Grade 11</b>	Look for leadership opportunities in clubs, sports teams, music groups, etc. Seek out-of-school opportunities to expand on interests and pursue unique angles on skills.
<b>Grade 12</b>	Remain involved in activities and solidify leadership roles, relationships with adult leaders, and related out-of-school pursuits.

Adapted from

*"The New Rules of College Admissions" Ten Former Admissions Officers Reveal what it Takes to get into College Today*

Stephen Kramer and Michael London, published by Simon & Schuster, New York

Extracurricular/Community Services Activities Sheet			
Name of Company/ Organization	Years of Participation & Hours per Week	Position/Role	Description

Adapted from  
“*Acing the College Application*”  
Michele A. Hernandez, Ed.D, published by Ballantine Books, New York

## **The university to which I am applying asked that my transcripts be reviewed by a credential evaluator. What does this mean?**

Universities might evaluate your grades and documents themselves, or they might require international applicants to pay an outside company, called a credential evaluator, to evaluate them on the university's behalf. You should follow application directions provided by the college or university's website. Some universities will indicate which credential evaluation organization they recommend.



For a list of evaluators, go to the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services website at:

<http://www.naces.org/members.htm>

## **How much does it cost to study in the United States?**

Education in the United States may appear expensive, but you have probably already realized that it offers excellent value for the money invested. It is very important to understand and plan the cost and financing of your education before you prepare and submit your applications to colleges. Universities and colleges will usually require a financial statement and guarantees as part of your application procedure. In addition, to apply for the student visa you will need to prove you are able to meet all the costs of your studies. If you are married and/or have children, you will

need to prove in advance that you have sufficient funds to support both yourself and your family.

The main types of costs involved in studying in the United States are tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other personal expenses.

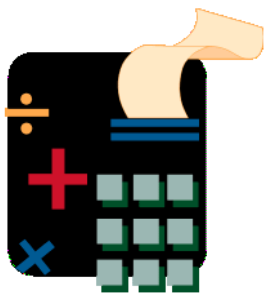
APPROXIMATE COSTS PER YEAR	
Tuition	\$5,000-\$30,000
Room-board	\$3,000-\$10,000
Books-supplies	\$400-\$1,000
Health Insurance	\$500-\$1,000
Personal Expenses	\$1,200-\$3,000
Travel to USA	\$1,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,000-\$47,000</b>

(Based on 2009 estimates)

Following are a number of links that will give you different options for estimating your college costs:

Estimated College Costs for Private College/University

<http://www.scholarshipworkshop.com/estimate2.html>



### Cost Calculators

<http://www.collegesavings.org/collegeCostCalculator.aspx> (collegeboard.com)

<http://www.petersons.com/finaid/tuitionfinder/search.asp> (petersons.com)

### Related Cost Estimation Information

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/add-it-up/482.html>

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/add-it-up/4494.html>

Following is a college cost comparison worksheet:

Chart your course to see which college or university best fits your financial resources. Your totals in expenses and funds available should be the same amount. If not, you have a funding gap, meaning that you have more expenses than funds available.

EXPENSES	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Tuition and fees	\$	\$	\$	\$
Books and supplies	\$	\$	\$	\$
Room and board	\$	\$	\$	\$
Transportation	\$	\$	\$	\$
Miscellaneous	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$
FUNDS AVAILABLE				
Student and parent contributions	\$	\$	\$	\$
Grants	\$	\$	\$	\$
Scholarships	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>FUNDING GAP</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$

Adapted from *Teens' Guide to College & Career Planning: Your High School Roadmap for College & Career Success*.

Published by Peterson's, A Nelnet Company

## What are the types of financial assistance available to students wishing to study in the United States?

**Grants:** are usually given to students with financial need (need based), and do not have to be repaid.

**Scholarships:** also called “merit aid”, are awarded for academic excellence or other special talents or abilities. Repayment is not required.



**Loans:** student loans have very favorable terms and conditions. They are sponsored by the federal government, state governments, and through commercial lending institutions. The Financial Aid Office in the college/university is the best source of information on student loans. These must be repaid, generally after you graduate or leave school.

**Federal Work-Study:** is a federally sponsored program that enables colleges to hire students for employment. If eligible, students work a limited number of hours throughout the school year. Many colleges use their own funds to hire students to work in the many departments and offices on campus.

**Financial Aid Programs:** the federal government is the single largest source of financial aid for students. In addition, a number of sources of financial aid are available to students

from state governments, private lenders, foundations, and private sources, and the colleges and universities themselves.

For more information about financial aid, you can visit the following links:

Financial Aid for Undergraduate International Students:

[http://www.nafsa.org/students.sec/financial\\_aid\\_for\\_undergraduate/](http://www.nafsa.org/students.sec/financial_aid_for_undergraduate/)



The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid:

<http://www.edupass.org/finaid/>



Financial Planning Worksheet:

<http://www.edupass.org/finaid/budgeting.phtml>

Peterson's Guide to Financial Aid

<http://www.petersons.com/finaid/file.asp?id=780>



## What are some useful websites for studying in the U.S.A.?

	Undergraduate Studies	Graduate Studies
<i>General Information</i>	<a href="http://www.EducationUSA.state.gov">www.EducationUSA.state.gov</a>	
<i>University and College Search</i>	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a> <a href="http://www.petersons.com">www.petersons.com</a> <a href="http://www.collegenavigator.com">www.collegenavigator.com</a> <a href="http://www.princetonreview.com">www.princetonreview.com</a> <a href="http://www.collegeview.com">www.collegeview.com</a>	<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a> <a href="http://www.petersons.com">www.petersons.com</a> <a href="http://www.mba.com">www.mba.com</a>
<i>Admissions Testing</i>	<p>English Proficiency Tests (TOEFL, IELTS)  <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a>,  <a href="http://www.ielts.org">www.ielts.org</a></p> <p>Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)  <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a></p> 	<p>English Proficiency Tests (TOEFL, IELTS)  <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a>,  <a href="http://www.ielts.org">www.ielts.org</a></p> <p>Graduate Record Examination (GRE)  <a href="http://www.gre.org">www.gre.org</a>, <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a></p> <p>Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)  <a href="http://www.mba.com">www.mba.com</a></p> <p>Law School Admission Test (LSAT)  <a href="http://www.lsatsat.org">www.lsatsat.org</a></p> <p>Medicine College Admission Test (MCAT)  <a href="http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat">www.aamc.org/students/mcat</a></p>
<i>Submitting Applications</i>	<a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a>	N/A

## How can I make sure that the college or university that I have chosen is accredited in the United States?

Accreditation is the approval of colleges and universities by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies, to ensure quality and continuous improvement. There are usually two very important steps to make sure that the college or university that you have chosen is accredited regionally and professionally in the United States:

Step One: the college or university should be recognized regionally by the regional accrediting bodies, which are members of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Step Two: the program that you are interested in studying in that college or university should be professionally accredited.

For more information, refer to the following link which will give you a list of CHEA Recognized Accrediting Organizations:

[http://chea.org/pdf/CHEA\\_USDE\\_AllAccred.pdf](http://chea.org/pdf/CHEA_USDE_AllAccred.pdf)



## **Examples of Programmatic or Professional Accreditation organizations (Academic Programs):**

Business Programs: [www.aacsb.edu](http://www.aacsb.edu)

Engineering and Science Programs: [www.abet.org](http://www.abet.org)

Architecture Programs: [www.naab.org](http://www.naab.org)

Law Programs: [www.abanet.org](http://www.abanet.org)

Pharmacy Programs: [www.aacp.org](http://www.aacp.org)

Dentistry Programs: [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)

Medical Programs: [www.ama.org](http://www.ama.org)

Medical Residency Programs: [www.ecfm.org](http://www.ecfm.org)

Nursing Programs: [www.aacn.nche.edu](http://www.aacn.nche.edu)

Teacher Education Programs: [www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)

Additional information on accreditation is available at [www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov)

## **How many colleges should I apply for, and how can I keep track of the requirements of the different schools on my list?**

The first step would be to divide the schools of your choice into one of the following three categories: “Highly Competitive”, “Competitive”, and “Less Competitive”. The category each school falls into depends on your qualifications, including details such as your GPA, standardized test scores, and extra-curricular activities. A “Highly Competitive” school is one where the majority of students accepted are more



qualified than you. A “Competitive” school is one where the majority of students accepted have the same qualifications as you. A “Less Competitive” school is one where the majority of students accepted are less qualified than you.

The second step would be to further narrow down your list to a reasonable number, depending on your budget and time. You should have at least 8 schools, including 2 Highly Competitive schools, 3 Competitive schools and 2 Less Competitive schools. If you are applying to more than 8 schools, you should keep the same ratio.



The last step is to put all the important information and dates in one place. Important information for each school includes its name, address, telephone number, website, application deadlines, testing requirements, number of recommendation letters, the dates interviews are available, the application fee, use of the common application form, and whether the application can be submitted online.

The following chart should assist you in keeping track of the important information pertaining to the different schools on your list:

Important Information and Dates (8 universities)

Highly Competitive 2

Competitive 3

Less Competitive 2

	School Name	Address	Tel.	Website	App. Deadlines	Tests Required	Recommendation Letters	Interview	App. Fee	Common App.	Online Submission
Highly Competitive											
Competitive											
Less Competitive											

## **Will my degree be recognized/equalized in the United Arab Emirates?**



If you are a U.A.E. national or a student aiming to finish your studies in the United States and come back to work in the U.A.E., you will want to make sure that the colleges/universities you apply for are recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Abu Dhabi (MOHESR). Therefore, the first step would be to visit the accreditation department at the MOHESR to get an official letter from them regarding the accreditation and recognition of the university and academic program you are interested in studying.

The MOHESR has a list of approved schools by major and degree type on its website, [www.mohesr.ae](http://www.mohesr.ae). This is important because when you return to the U.A.E., you will probably want to have your degree recognized/equalized. You can do so by visiting the MOHESR's website: [www.mohesr.ae/equicert](http://www.mohesr.ae/equicert).

## **How do I get degrees received from an accredited institution in the U.S. authenticated/attested?**

The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi does NOT authenticate/attest documents from schools in the U.S. We recommend that documents be authenticated/attested in the U.S. by the state and then by the U.A.E. Embassy in Washington, D.C. before returning to the U.A.E.

**I want to earn my degree online because I am unable to leave the U.A.E. to study. How do I begin to search for an accredited online school/program in the U.S.?**

Distance education is a popular way to study and you will want to make sure that the college/university/program you enroll in is accredited by an accrediting organization/body approved by the U.S. Department of Education. If in doubt, contact and EducationUSA advisor at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi for assistance when selecting programs.

For more information on accreditation, please visit:  
[www.detc.org/accred.html](http://www.detc.org/accred.html), [www.geteducated.com](http://www.geteducated.com)

If you wish to have your online degree, obtained from an accredited online university in the United States, recognized by the MOHESR, check with the Commission of Academic Accreditation at the MOHESR prior to enrollment by visiting their inquiry page:

<http://www.caa.ae/caa/DesktopModules/enquiries.aspx?tabindex=14&tabid=59>

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## Applying for a U.S. Student Visa (F1 Visa)

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1. Go to the “Non-Immigrant Visa” section on the U.S. Embassy website:  
<http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/niv/main.html>
2. Select the “Student Visa (F1)” link to find the requirements:  
<http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/niv/students.html>
3. Visit the website below to pay the SEVIS fees ONLINE:  
<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/>
4. Start the DS-160 Online Visa Application Form:  
<http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/niv/forms.html>



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## Practical Tips:

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- Please make sure to read all the instructions carefully for completing the Non Immigrant Visa Application online (found on the first page of the application).

*“Read all the instructions carefully ”*

- Please note that it is advisable that you save the application to your Computer Desktop, so that you can go to it several times and make changes to it. This new application is designed in a way that if there is no activity for 20 minutes or more when completing the online application, the session will expire and all the entered data will be lost. If that happens, you have two options:

*“Save the application to your Computer Desktop”*

- Start a New Application.
- Upload a previous application (this is the option that is advisable, as you can upload a previously saved application).

- Please also note that this new application guides you automatically. When you enter insufficient data in each field, you would get an error indicated in **Red**. Therefore, you need to correct the errors before you can click “Save” or “Next” to continue completing your online application form.

*“correct the errors ... to continue”*

- It is very important to click the “Sign Application” button at the end of the application. If you do not do so, the application might be terminated.
- You need to scan all required documents after signing them and upload them along with your personal photo to the online application.
- Finally, you must click “Submit” to submit the application. After submitting the application online, you will get a “confirmation page”. You must print and bring the confirmation page with you at the time of the interview.
- You need to bring the following with you to the visa interview:
- Confirmation page with bar- code
  - Original I-20 Form
  - A photo copy of the I-20 Form
  - Passport that is valid for at least six months from your intended date of travel
  - One correct size (5 cm by 5 cm) passport photo (in case your photo did not upload successfully to the application)
  - 12<sup>th</sup> grade school record
  - Financial Guarantee (for self-supported students) or Scholarship Letter (for sponsored students)

*“Sign  
Application”*

*“scan ... and  
upload”*

*“bring the  
confirmation  
page”*

*“bring the  
following ...  
to the visa  
interview”*

- Bring with you the receipt for payment of visa application fee at the National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD) “blue and pink fee receipt copies from any NBAD branch”.
  - Bring proof of payment of SEVIS fee.
- Please note, as a student, you do not need to make an appointment online for the visa interview in the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, you just need to show up with all your documents at 10:00 AM on any of the following days: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.
- “10:00 AM on  
... Sunday,  
Monday,  
Tuesday and  
Thursday”*
- You must apply as early as possible. Some visas are subject to administrative processing, which can result in visa issuance delays of up to three months.
- “apply as early  
as possible”*

We encourage you to follow the application instructions carefully. If you have any questions related to the visa application process in general, please feel free to send an email to: [AbudhabiNIV@state.gov](mailto:AbudhabiNIV@state.gov).



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## Frequently Asked Questions: Student Visas

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To obtain information about the visa services at the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, please visit:

[http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/visa\\_services.html](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/visa_services.html)

### **What is the difference between an immigrant visa and non-immigrant visa?**

An immigrant visa is a visa issued to people who intend to reside permanently in the United States, while a non-immigrant visa (NIV) is the visa needed to enter the United States for short term visits, study, medical treatment, business meetings, and tourism. Students are issued a special category of non-immigrant visas which is referred to as the F1 Visa.

### **For how long is the student visa (F1) valid?**

A student is allowed to remain in the U.S. as long as he or she is studying full time, and it is issued in the name of the educational institute, college or university where he or she is planning to go and study with. This visa should be renewed for any of the following reasons:

- If the student comes back to the U.A.E. for vacation and plans to return after the expiration date of the existing visa.
- If the student wants to change colleges or universities. The student will need to apply for a new student visa under the name of the new college or university.

## **Do I need to make an appointment for a visa interview, and how do I do that?**

Students applying for a visa through the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi do not need to make an appointment online for a visa interview, however, they are required to show up at 10:00AM on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. There are no visa interviews on Wednesdays.

## **What can I expect on the day of my interview with a visa officer?**

While the consular staff tries to eliminate unnecessary waiting time for applicants, this process can take several hours, especially in summer months and during times of high demand.

You will go through security screening and document checking (documents mentioned earlier), and then you will proceed into the consular section waiting room. At that point, you will present your documents to a staff member to be entered into a computerized system and you will be given a number. You must then proceed to the fingerprinting window. After you have been fingerprinted, you will be asked to take a seat until your number is displayed on the electronic board when it is time for your interview. Translators are available, if needed.

## **Once I have been interviewed, how long does it take to get a visa?**

Every visa application is unique, and the length of time to process a visa depends on several factors. Visa processing can range from three days to three months (and in rare cases even longer). It is important to plan well ahead of the intended date of travel to the United States, and **apply for your visa as early as possible.**

## **What does it mean if I was told that my application needs “Additional Processing”?**

Sometimes additional processing is required by U.S. law and cannot be waived. We cannot accurately guarantee how long the processing of any specific application may take. Therefore, we strongly advise you not to buy restricted or non-refundable airline tickets or make other inflexible plans before the visa is actually issued. Note: you will be given back your passport until the Consular Section at the Embassy contacts you to bring it for visa issuance.

## **How can I check on the status of my visa application, if it needed additional processing?**

You may check the status of your case online at:

<http://www.abudhabiniv.net>

If you have further questions regarding your application, you may email the non-immigrant visa section at [AbuDhabiNIV@state.gov](mailto:AbuDhabiNIV@state.gov). You are advised to wait at least one week before checking on the status of your case.

## **The visa officer gave me a yellow sheet of paper at the end of my interview; what does that mean?**

This is NOT a refusal. It simply means that application is still pending and that there are additional documents or processes required before the visa can be issued.

## **When I am granted the visa, should I go to the Embassy and pick up my passport?**

No, there is no need for you to personally pick it up; it will be sent to you by Empost delivery service.

## **I was refused a visa. Can I apply again?**

Once an applicant has been refused a visa, that decision cannot be appealed, but he or she may reapply for a visa anytime. When reapplying, applicants have to provide all documents again and must demonstrate that their situation has changed significantly. This often means providing new information that helps overcome the issues that led to the refusal.

## **What do I do if my visa expires while I am in the United States?**

The visa expiration date does not affect the time you have to stay in the United States once you are there. It simply means that must enter the United States before the expiration date on the visa.

## **If my expired passport has a valid visa in it, do I need a new visa when I get a new passport?**

If any of the following details have changed between your old passport and your new passport, then you will need a new visa:

- The spelling of your name
- Your place of birth
- Your date of birth

If none of these details have changed, then you may travel, carrying both the old passport and the new passport.

## **I lost my passport or my passport was stolen with a valid U.S. visa in it. What do I do?**

File a police report and report the lost or stolen passport to the Emirati Passport Agency. Apply for a new visa and bring a copy of the police report with you to the visa interview. Be sure to make a copy of the visa and passport data page and keep it in a safe place.

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## American Center for Press & Cultural Affairs - US Embassy

### Cultural & Educational Exchange Programs

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The Government of the United States sponsors a number of programs to assist students and scholars in the U.A.E. who wish to study and conduct research in the United States. These exchange programs are open to U.A.E. citizens (must not have dual U.S. citizenship) living in the U.A.E.

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### For Students Interested in Undergraduate Study

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#### Near East and South Asia (NESA) Undergraduate Exchange Program

The NESA Undergraduate Exchange Program awards scholarships to undergraduates for one academic year of study in the U.S. in a non-degree program. Students are enrolled in a full-time undergraduate course of study and live on-campus with American peers. Applicants must be proficient in English and have a strong interest in learning about the United States.



## **The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Students Leaders Program**



The MEPI Student Leaders Program is a fully-funded five-week intensive leadership training program in the U.S. for undergraduate students in the U.A.E. and other Middle Eastern countries.

[http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational\\_exchange\\_res2.html](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational_exchange_res2.html)

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## **For Students Interested in Graduate Study**

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### **Fulbright Scholarship Program**

The Fulbright Scholarship awards scholarships for graduate study in the USA. Funding will be granted for up to two years of study in a master's or doctoral program. Scholarships are awarded to applicants in any field who demonstrate academic excellence, strong English language skills, leadership qualities, and a commitment to improving cross-cultural relations through international exchange. Applicants must also express a desire to use skills gained in the U.S. to serve the U.A.E. upon completion of their studies.

[http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational\\_exchange\\_res.html#](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational_exchange_res.html#)



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## For Mid-Career Professionals or Scholars

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### International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)

The International Visitor Program was designed to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and other nations through communication at the personal and professional levels. The IVLP Program brings participants to the United States from all over the world each year to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to experience the U.S. firsthand. The visitors are usually current or potential leaders in government, politics, the media, education, and other fields.

<http://exchanges.state.gov/ivlp/ivlp.html>

### The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program



The Humphrey Fellowship Program brings accomplished professionals from designated countries to the United States at a midpoint in their careers for a year of study and related professional experience. The program provides a basis for establishing long-lasting, productive partnerships and relationships between citizens of the United States and their professional counterparts in other countries, fostering an exchange of knowledge and mutual understanding throughout the world.

<http://www.humphreyfellowship.org>

For more information about the cultural exchange programs offered by the Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, please visit:

[http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational\\_exchange\\_res.html](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/educational_exchange_res.html)

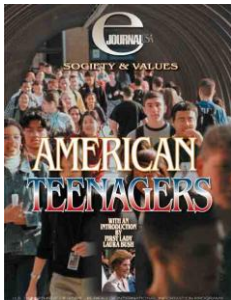
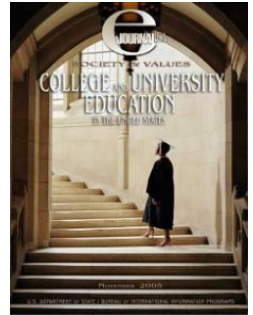
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## Additional Resources for Study in the U.S.A.

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### College and University Education in the United States

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#1105>



### American Teenagers

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#teenagers>

### See You in the U.S.A.

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#0905>



## EducationUSA Booklets from the Series: If You Want to Study in the United States

- Booklet One - Undergraduate Study
- Booklet Two - Graduate and Professional Study and Research
- Booklet Three - Short-Term Study, English Language Programs, Distance Education and Accreditation
- Booklet Four - Getting Ready to Go: Practical Information for Living and Studying in the United States



<http://www.educationusa.info/pages/students/publications.php>

*Hard copies of these publications are available from the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai.*

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## Glossary of Terms

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Academic Advisor	A member of a college faculty who helps and advises students solely on academic matters.
Academic Year	The period of formal instruction, usually September to May; may be divided into terms of varying lengths – semesters, trimesters, or quarters.
Accreditation	Approval of colleges and universities by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies to ensure quality and continuous improvement.
Associate's Degree	The degree awarded after a two-year period of study; it can be either terminal (vocational) or transfer (the first two years of a bachelor's degree).

## Bachelor's Degree

A degree awarded upon completion of approximately four years of full-time study in the liberal arts and sciences or professional subjects.

## College

A postsecondary institution that provides an undergraduate education and, in some cases, master's level degrees. College, in a separate sense, is a division of a university; for example, a College of Business.

## College Catalog

An official publication giving information about a university's academic programs, facilities, entrance requirements, and student life.

## Conditional Acceptance

Tentative acceptance in a degree program, pending successful completion of stated requirements/conditions.

## Core Requirements

Mandatory courses required for completion of the degree.

Course	Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five hours (or more) per week during a term. A degree program is made up of a specified number of required and elective courses, which varies from institution to another.
Credits	Units that universities use to record the completion of courses (with passing grades) that are required for an academic degree. The catalog defines the number and kind of credits that are required for the university's degrees and states the value of each course offered in terms of "credit hours" or "units."
Electives	Courses that students choose to take for credit toward their intended degree, as distinguished from courses that they are required to take.

Fees	An amount charged by universities, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.
Financial Aid	A general term that includes all types of money, loans, and work/study programs offered to a student to help pay tuition, fees, and living expenses.
GPA	Grade Point Average. A system of recording achievement based on a numerical average of the grades attained in each course.
High School	The U.S. term for secondary education.
International Student Advisor	The person associated with a university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to international students in the areas of U.S. government regulations, visas, academic regulations, language, housing, travel plans, insurance, and legal matters. This person usually works in the International Student

	Office (ISO) and might also be referred to as the Designated School Official (DSO).
Liberal Arts	A term referring to academic studies of subjects in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences. Also called “liberal arts and sciences” or “arts and sciences.”
Major	The subject in which a student wishes to concentrate on studying.
Minor	A subject in which the student takes the second greatest concentration of courses.
Non-Resident student	A student who does not meet residency requirements of the state while attending a public (state) university. Tuition fees and admissions policies may differ for residents and non-residents. International students are usually classified as non-residents, and there is little possibility of changing to resident status at a later date for tuition purposes.

## Notarization

The certification of a document (or a statement or a signature) as authentic and true by a public official (known in the U.S. as a notary public) or by a lawyer who is also a commissioner of oaths. Sometimes schools of medicine will require an applicant's signature to be notarized.

## Prerequisite

Programs or courses that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

## Quarter

Period of study of approximately 10-12 weeks' duration or one-quarter of the academic year.

## Registration

Process through which students select courses to be taken during a quarter, semester or trimester.

SAT	Scholastic Assessment Test. A primarily multiple choice test of mathematics and English abilities that is required by many U.S. colleges and universities for admission into an undergraduate program.
School	A term that usually refers to elementary, middle, or secondary school. Also used in place of the words “college,” “university,” or “institution,” or as a general term for any place of education; for example, law school, graduate school.
Semester	Period of study lasting approximately 15 to 16 weeks or one-half the academic year.
SEVIS	The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. A networked computer system set up in the United States to track information on non-immigrant international students and scholars attending school in the U.S.

Special Student	A student who is taking classes, but is not enrolled in a degree program.
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), an English language proficiency examination required of applicants whose native language is not English.
Transcripts	A certified copy of a student's educational record.
Transfer	Process of moving from one university to another to complete a degree.
Trimester	Period of study consisting of approximately three equal terms of 16 weeks during the academic year.
Tuition	The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).
University	A large postsecondary institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

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## References

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*"If You Want to Study in the United States"*

Published by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,  
U.S. Department of State

*"Study in the United States: A Guide for Bahraini Students"*

Education Advising Section, Public Affairs Section,  
U.S. Embassy Manama

*"Study in the United States: A Guide for Saudi Students"*

Education Advising Section, Public Affairs Section,  
U.S. Embassy Riyadh

*Teens' Guide to College & Career Planning:*

*Your High School Roadmap for College & Career Success*

Published by Peterson's, A Nelnet Company

*"Acing the College Application"*

Michele A. Hernandez, Ed.D.

Published by Ballantine Books, New York

*"The New Rules of College Admissions"*

*Ten Former Admissions Officers Reveal what it Takes  
to get into College Today*

Stephen Kramer and Michael London

Published by Simon & Schuster New York

U.S. Department of Education ([www.ED.gov](http://www.ED.gov))

[www.thescholarshipworkshop.com](http://www.thescholarshipworkshop.com)

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

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